

Chess Family Belavenets

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and Vladimir Barsky

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Foreword

Yuri Averbakh

In October 1941, the Moscow Sports Committee decided to hold an exhibition tournament to show the whole world that the capital of our Motherland, even though it was a frontline city back then, was still living a normal life. The atmosphere in the city was most anxious: “sausages” hanging over the streets (that’s how we called airships), bombs falling; at night, I was sometimes on roof duty – catching the small firebombs and throwing them into boxes containing sand or water. During the blitzes, I would get up on the roof rather than running into a bomb shelter. Once, I went into the Sports Committee building on Markhlevsky Street [*now Milyutinsky Lane*], and there I heard that they wanted to hold a tournament for masters and candidate masters.

The following masters took part: Yudovich, Belavenets, Blumenfeld, Zubarev, and Rabinovich. Abram Rabinovich worked at the Young Pioneers Stadium back then, and I studied there for a time. He was fascinated with openings, showed us some lines and then said, “White is better.” And someone, for instance, Yura Gusev, would argue, “No, black is better!” Rabinovich would cry out angrily, “Then play, you peasants!” They would sit down and play blitz to decide whose position was better. Rabinovich was a most likeable man; he died during the war, in 1943.

They invited candidate masters as well: Khachaturov, Tarasov, Stanishnev, Aronin and me. Stanishnev, a textile institute student, was a very talented chess player; he achieved his master’s norm after 9 rounds. Then he went to the front and never returned. Sergei Belavenets didn’t return either. As it turned out, he played his last ever tournament game against me...

Sergei was a very good, pleasant man. There was never any friction between us, and I don’t remember anyone saying a single bad word against him. Belavenets was friends with Mikhail Yudovich, whom I consider my teacher (he worked as a coach in the Pioneers House on Stopani Lane [*now Ogorodnaya Sloboda Lane*]). I still remember the old epigram, “I’m the master of the opening./ I’m the master of the ending./ Everyone knows Yudovich-Belavenets.”

In a way, I projected my liking of Sergei onto Ludmila. I’ve always tried to help her. When the TV show *Shakhmatnaya Shkola (Chess School)* needed a female host, I decided to invite her. Ludmila was a natural fit. *Shakhmatnaya Shkola* was on air from 1969 to 1986. I gave endgame lessons for highly-qualified chess players, Alexander Kotov read lectures on middlegames, and Yudovich gave opening lessons. Later, Yudovich was replaced by Boris Voronkov, the

father of the famous journalist Sergey Voronkov (Boris and I were childhood friends). Ludmila's lessons for beginners were very interesting.

The Belavenets family is a true chess family – the name of the book is just perfect. By the way, I knew not only Ludmila's father but also her father's father. He was also a chess fan and frequently visited tournaments. I knew her mother too, she worked in the Sports Committee. We're still friends with Ludmila, I gladly support her events, helping if needed. She serves an honorable cause – teaching young chess players, and I wish her every success with all of my heart.

Moscow, 2012

My Father Gifted Me Chess

Ludmila Belavenets

I consider my life to have worked out well. I have the most important thing for me: a job that I enjoy. I love chess and I love children, and my work combines both of them. What I earned from it (as we now like to say) is another matter... The first thing parents ask is whether their child will achieve anything. I answer to each of them: yes, as chess isn't an end in itself, but a means to an end. Because no matter whom your children become eventually, their fascination with chess will unite them when they grow up. It means that you belong to a special world.

Myachkovo – Koptelsky – Ordynka

I remember myself ever since the evacuation, when I was barely three years old. When the Nazi forces got close to Moscow, our family left for Gorkovskaya Oblast. My childhood memory still holds the name of the village we settled in – Myachkovo. To be honest, I'm not quite sure how this name is spelled – in my mind, it is just associated with football, which is why I remember it.

My first memories: we live in a small cottage, and it's very cold. So cold that snow has actually accumulated beside the bed I shared with my sister – in the corners between the floor and the walls. Mother was very anxious not to lose her children. Father wrote to her in one of his last letters, "Do whatever it takes, nothing else is particularly important, but you must save the children!" He said that he was not under any threat, he was young and healthy and about to be sent to some tank repair school (but this ultimately didn't happen). Anyway, what could really threaten him? Well, there's that small thing, war, but...

I still have this triangle-shaped letter from the front lines. The letter was sent to our home address, 1st Koptelsky Lane in Moscow. This building now hosts Dvorkovich's chess lounge, and before the revolution, it belonged to my grandfather, Fyodor Fyodorovich Malanyin. In 1942, we received a death notice from the front lines...

Since it was very cold in the cottage, I never left the bed for the entire winter. In the spring, I was put on the floor, and it turned out that I had forgotten how to walk. My sister, three years older than me, cried out, "Mom, Mom, look, Milka can't walk!" I was very upset: such a miserable situation for me, but everybody just laughed out loud!..



Father's letter from the front

When I grew a bit older, my sister taught me to say that my father died at the front lines. I gleefully and proudly announced that to everybody and was quite surprised that they didn't share my delight...

Later, we got back to Moscow, to 1st Koptelsky Lane. Mother's entire big family lived there; she was the youngest of eleven children. After 1917, our family was forced to "make room" for other tenants, but everyone still stayed in that building. After she married, my mother moved to my father's ground floor room on Bolshaya Ordynka Street, and we lived there until 1960. However, after evacuation ended we spent some time in the building on Koptelsky, I don't remember why. Perhaps we were waiting until a potbelly stove was installed in the Ordynka apartment; craftsmen would build them out of sheet iron and fit the pipe through the window. I remember the stove well: it didn't provide much heat, but at least you could make porridge on it. I spent most of my childhood and youth on Bolshaya Ordynka. When Khrushchev launched a building campaign in Moscow, we got relocated. Our old apartment block on Bolshaya Ordynka doesn't exist anymore, it was demolished.

There were four of us in our room in what had become a communal flat: my mother, sister, aunt and me. We had no gas, only kerosene heaters. Washing was a big hassle! We went to the bathhouse with our own tubs, because there were long queues for the sauna buckets. Standing in line was tiring and hot – no fun at all. But we had a great neighborhood with lots of friends. Now, the concept of neighborhood, the estate, is all but gone – nobody even knows their neighbors' names any more. But we knew everybody in the neighborhood.



With my big sister Nadezhda. 1943

Several two-story buildings, gates – all that was our territory. Our apartment block, #10, was very close to the center. I remember constant confrontations with the people from apartment block #14. We also played cops-and-robbers, and ran a lot...

An unforgettable childhood memory: preparations for the parade, tanks rumbling on Ordynka in the night. On the 1st May, the gates closed, the police cordoned off the street, not letting anybody through, and we stood at the gates, watching the vehicles from Red Square going down the Moskvoretsky Bridge



My mother Klavdia Fyodorovna. 1934

and Ordynka Street. Then the athletes and crowd followed. That day was great fun: we bought lollipops and yo-yos. A wonderful celebration!

Even later, when we grew up a bit, we were still excited on the bank holiday. My mother's boss at her job once allowed her to take me to the march. We walked through Red Square, and then everyone in the school was asking me, "Have you seen Stalin?" There was a girl in our class who actually saw Stalin: when their column walked through Red Square, he was watching from the stands. And everyone went to look at the girl who saw Stalin. But I wasn't as lucky as her.

In March 1953, I wanted to go and say farewell to Stalin, but the school teachers said that we shouldn't go. My older sister was much more active than me, she ran home and hurried me up, "Come on, get dressed, we're going to Stalin's funeral!" Our mother had already gone to the center that day, to a pharmacy on Trubnaya Street, and she saw what was happening there. She



This photo was taken before the revolution, in 1916 or 1917. The three Belavenets brothers: Vladimir, Kirill and Sergei (my father)

many of my classmates. And then I wouldn't have met your grandmother, and you wouldn't exist, silly!"

This made quite an impression on me! Every child thinks that the whole world revolves around them – how can it be that he wouldn't have existed?! I often think that we consider some events in our lives as tragic, but then we realize that it was meant to be this way, and it's all right. In this case, some boyish antics changed my grandfather's entire life.

He learned a civilian profession and became a renowned constructor, specializing in bridges. Towards the end of his life, he moved from Smolensk to Moscow and worked in the Highway State Department. He encouraged me to play chess: he loved it, and it was no accident that my father also got interested in chess. Even my grandmother Natalia Evlampievna, his wife, played correspondence chess, although I suspect that my grandfather played for her. By the way, my other grandmother was called Agrippina Kharlampievna – there's some old-time Russian names for you.

When my father was a child, he lived with the family of his aunt Sofia Pavlovna Belavenets, the sister of Vsevolod Pavlovich, for a time. Her husband Konstantin Alexeevich Vygodchikov was a famous chess player as well, and he competed in several Russian SFSR championships. They studied chess a lot. My grandmother said that it was impossible to talk to them: as soon as they

Chess Lessons

Sergei Belavenets

Evgeny Sveshnikov, grandmaster:

Master Sergei Belavenets [1963, written by Ludmila Belavenets and incorporated into the current book] was the first chess book that I read, and I really enjoyed it. Before that, I had never read any chess literature, except for the illustrated book *Shakhmaty cherez veka i strany* (*Chess Through the Ages and Countries*), my mother's gift for my tenth birthday (however, I mostly looked at the stamp reproductions in it).

Interestingly, my opening repertoire was largely formed by Sergei Belavenets. I rather liked his idea – the move ♖d5 in the Botvinnik system (white then plays ♗xf7, black plays ♙xh4, etc.). I started building my opening repertoire based on his games in this line. Only many years later, in 1995, did I come to the conclusion that this idea, which I'd lived with most of my chess life, had been finally refuted. But that is beside the point! Thanks to the book on Sergei Belavenets, I learned to analyze. I was attracted by its bright ideas and depth of analysis, and this is much more important! That's what I value in chess the most.

Mark Dvoretsky, Distinguished Coach of the USSR (from an interview):

Mikhail Shereshevsky wrote a great book called *Endgame Strategy*. Do you know how it was created?

In 1976, I played in the First League of the Soviet Championship in Minsk, and Mikhail helped me. We discussed various subjects, but he was especially interested in methods for improving chess technique. Later, he came to Moscow and studied my notes, in particular, the notebook which I had labeled "General Principles of Endgame Play". When he returned to Minsk, he applied these principles in his work with the Belorussian youth team. The results were impressive: his team won the USSR team championship, which was previously only won by the "giants": Moscow, Ukraine, or Russia. Based on ideas derived from my notes and newly-acquired experience, he wrote that book, handpicking all the examples himself. I was very flattered.

But I was first prompted to work on this subject after reading the book *Master Sergei Belavenets*, specifically, the part where Belavenets discusses endgames. His thoughts seemed clever and interesting.

Ludmila Belavenets:

The following work is only a fraction of the materials my father prepared for his textbook. Sadly, most of them were lost during the war and in the early post-war years.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF MIDDLEGAME PLAY

The game of chess is divided into three general parts: the opening, middlegame and endgame. The goal of the opening is to mobilize your forces. The middlegame is the time for a pitched battle: mutual attacks, maneuvers, and tactical skirmishes often end with one player gaining a material or positional advantage. Conversion of this advantage often happens at the third stage, the endgame.

Chess games don't always include all three parts. Sometimes they don't even reach the endgame. This happens when the middlegame battle leads to a quick and unfortunate result for one side: their king gets checkmated, or they lose so much material that further prolonging the game is useless.

There is also another kind of chess game, where tactical middlegame-like complications already occur in the opening. Even before all the pieces are developed, we see dazzling fights on the board of which any middlegame would be envious. Often, such games don't have a middlegame at all. After the furious opening fight, most pieces get exchanged, and the game, skipping the most romantic stage – the middlegame – goes straight into a prosaic endgame.

Let's look, for instance, at the game **Belavenets – Lisitsin** (*game i*) from the 10th Soviet championship (1937). Here's how it went:

1. d2-d4	g8-f6
2. g1-f3	d7-d5
3. c2-c4	c8-f5

Black obviously intends to sharpen the game right out of the opening. With his next move, white decides to cooperate. If he wanted a quieter game, he would have played 4. cxd5 5. dxd5 5. ... bd2.

4. ♖d1-b3	b8-c6
5. ♘b1-c3	...

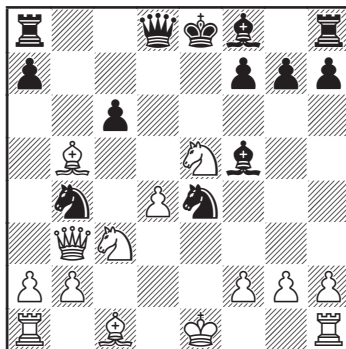
Not 5. ♖xb7 ♙d7 6. ♘c3? ♖b8 7. ♖a6 ♘b4, but 6. ♖b3 gives White an edge.

5...	e7-e5
------	-------

6. c4xd5!	♘c6-b4?
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Black should have accepted an equal position after 6... ♘xd4 7. ♘xd4 exd4 8. ♖a4+ c6 9. ♖xd4 cxd4, but his approach is “complicate things, no matter what”.

7. e2-e4!	♘f6xe4
8. ♙f1-b5+	c7-c6
9. d5xc6	b7xc6
10. ♘f3xe5	...



Look at this position. It doesn't resemble an opening at all. Usually, it's all quiet on the board after ten moves, but this is a tense middlegame already. Such dazzling complications always lead to sudden simplifications, and the board becomes very calm after the storm. Black's position is already lost.

10... ♖f5-e6

11. ♘e5xc6! ...

A fascinating subtlety. It now turns out that, after 11... ♖xb3, white can first grab the knight along the way, 12. ♘xb4+, and only then, after 12... ♗e7 13. ♘c6+, come back for the queen. Black's reply is forced.

12... ♗d7 13. ♖xd7+ ♔xd7 was relatively better. 11.d5! would also win.

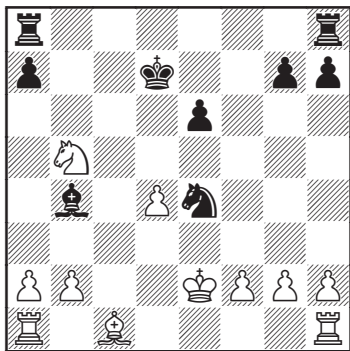
11... ♗d8-b6

12. ♘c6xb4+ ♗b6xb5

13. ♗b3xe6+ f7xe6

14. ♘c3xb5 ♖f8xb4+

15. ♔e1-e2 ♔e8-d7

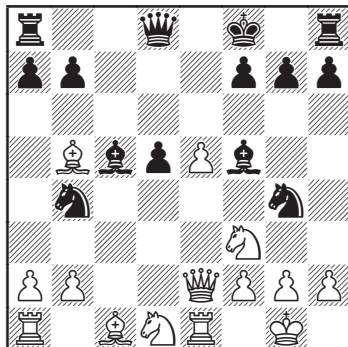


The tactical storm has subsided, and there's now an endgame on the board, with two extra pawns for white. He only needs a bit of technique to convert the advantage. Where was the

middlegame in this encounter? The common concept of three stages of the game was turned on its head: there were middlegame-like complications in the opening, and then the players went straight to the endgame, essentially skipping the middlegame. [Note this game is analyzed in full as No. 11 later in this book.]

There are two types of position in the middlegame. One is characterized by an abundance of tactical blows, complications, and intricate piece interactions. Let's call this kind of middlegame "tactical". It has no solid strategic ideas and no series of purposeful maneuvers. What decides the outcome here is tactics, calculation of lines, the ability to find tactical blows. Such positions usually have no pawn chains and the game is open. Pieces of both sides easily come into contact with each other, creating a branching net of lines. In such positions, you need precise calculation first and foremost, while the other side of chess struggle, strategy, plays only a secondary role.

Let's look at an example of a tactical middlegame.



This position is taken from game 19 of the **Euwe – Alekhine** return match, 1937 (*game ii*). The game is very open, and it enters the stage of wild complications. After

1.h2-h3 h7-h5!

Alekhine sacrificed his g4 knight, hoping to get an attack on the white king's position in exchange. There followed:

2.♔c1-g5 ♖d8-b6

3.♘f3-h4 ♙f5-e4

4.h3xg4 ♞b4-c2

There is no general strategy behind either sides' play. The fight boils down to creating and fending off single tactical threats. Now, black both threatens to capture the a1 rook and play 5...♘d4, so white's reply is more or less forced.

5.♘d1-c3 ♞c2-d4!

Capturing the rook doesn't do much good, since after 5...♘xa1 6.♘xe4 dxe4 7.♖xa1 hxg4 8.♙c4, white retains an overwhelming position.

However, black has the resource 8...♖h5!, and the situation remains unclear.

6.♖e2-f1!? ...

This move still wins, but it is not the best. Analysis shows that white could easily win if he gave back the sacrificed piece and launched a counter-attack on the opposing king – 6.♖d2. However, it's hard to navigate such complications, and Euwe's desire to keep the material advantage is understandable.

6... h5xg4

7.♘c3-a4 ♖b6-c7

8.♖e1xe4? ...

White probably thinks that he has to give back some material, because the hanging g5 bishop and h4 knight ensure an initiative for black (he threatened both 8...♖h5 and 8...♖xe5).

White could retain his advantage with 8.♘xc5! ♖xc5 9.♙d3.

8... d5xe4

9.♖f1-c4 ...

9.♖f1-c1! would clearly be more precise, as on 9...♖xe5 10.♙f4 would give him a clear advantage.

9... ♖a8-c8?

A bad move. White can now win with 10.♘xc5. Black should have played 9...♖xe5 10.♖xc5+ ♖xc5 11.♘xc5 ♘xb5 with a somewhat worse endgame.

10.♖a1-c1? b7-b6?

The sudden 10...♖xe5 11.♘xc5 ♙g8! gave black a decent position.

11.♘a4xc5 b6xc5

The position has simplified a bit. Had Euwe played 12.e6! now, he would have easily won, since 12...♘xe6 is decisively met with 13.♘g6+.

To avoid making things too difficult, we won't show all the complicated lines here. The reader can find them in the match game collection. We'll only point out that in this position, white played **12.♙b5-a6?**, which gave Alekhine an opportunity to play **12... ♖c7xe5!** and launch a counter-attack that led to a draw.

We can draw some conclusions. There are no general strategic ideas in



Lilienthal versus Belavenets, Moscow Championship, 1937. Photo from V. Ereemeev's archive



A meeting of club players and USSR Master of Sport Sergei Belavenets



Ludmila Belavenets, Central Chess Club, 1957



Celebrating Alexander Nikitin's 70th birthday



With Mark Dvoretzky and Alexander Nikitin

32. ♖c4-d2 ♘d7-f6

Now black has nothing. 32... ♙h6 is met with 33. ♙f2, attacking the d4 pawn.

33. ♙e1-h4 f5xe4

34. ♖d2xe4 ♙d5xe4

35. ♙h4xf6 ♙g7xf6

36. ♚e2xe4. Draw.

**No. 13. Sergei Belavenets –
Alexander Ilyin-Zhenevsky
10th Soviet Championship
Tbilisi 1937**

Queen's Gambit D66

1. d2-d4 d7-d5

2. c2-c4 e7-e6

3. ♖b1-c3 ♘g8-f6

4. ♙c1-g5 ♙f8-e7

5. e2-e3 h7-h6

6. ♙g5-h4 0-0

7. ♚a1-c1 ...

White usually plays 7. ♖f3 to prevent Capablanca's defense 7...b6, because after 8.cxd5 ♖xd5 9. ♙xe7 ♚xe7 10. ♖xd5 exd5 11. ♚c2, black is forced to play c6, which is not exactly beneficial for him.

Later it turned out that instead of 11...c6, black has a much stronger move 11...c5! 12.dxc5 d4 with great counterplay, so 11. ♚c2 didn't become popular, and white had to choose between several other moves. 7. ♚c1, on the other hand, became the main line.

7... ♘b8-d7

8. ♖g1-f3 c7-c6

9. ♙f1-d3 d5xc4

10. ♙d3xc4 ♘f6-d5

Black could probably equalize more easily after 10...b5 11. ♙d3

a6 12.a4 bxa4 etc. Now, because of black's move h6, white manages to avoid the simplifying bishop trade.

11. ♙h4-g3 ♘d7-f6

12. ♙c4-d3 ...

Black threatened (for instance, after 12.0-0) to play the unpleasant 12...♖xc3 13. ♚xc3 ♖e4 with the subsequent ♖xc3, gaining the bishop pair.

12... c6-c5

13.0-0 c5xd4

14.e3xd4 b7-b6

15. ♚d1-e2 ...

It was better to play 15. ♚a4 ♙b7 16. ♙a6, and the weakness of black's queenside is quite noticeable.

It seems that after 16...♖xc3 17. ♚xc3 ♙xa6 18. ♚xa6 ♖e4, black's position is fine.

15... ♘d5-b4

16. ♙d3-c4 ♙c8-b7

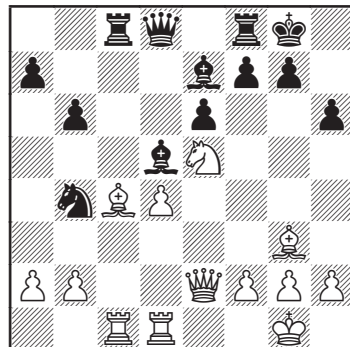
17. ♚f1-d1 ...

17. ♚cd1 was more aggressive, intending ♖e5 and f4 with a kingside attack.

17... ♚a8-c8

18. ♖f3-e5 ♖f6-d5

19. ♖c3xd5 ♙b7xd5?!



The lack of energy in white's play had allowed black to equalize, but black's last move again cedes the advantage to white. After 19... ♖xd5 20. ♗b3, black had an equal position.

20. a2-a3 ♗d5xc4
 21. ♖c1xc4 ♘b4-d5
 22. ♖d1-c1 ♖c8xc4
 23. ♗e2xc4 a7-a5
 24. ♗c4-c6 ...

The open c-file gives white a clear advantage, and only the strong d5 knight allows black to maintain any balance.

24... ♗e7-f6
 25. ♘e5-d7 ♖f8-e8
 26. ♘d7xf6+ ...
 26. ♘xb6 ♗xd4! gave white
 nothing.
 26... g7xf6
 27. h2-h3 ♖g8-h7
 28. ♗g3-c7 ♗d8-c8?

A mistake that loses a pawn. After the simple 28... ♘xc7 29. ♗xc7 ♗xc7 30. ♖xc7, white's advantage in the endgame is probably not sufficient to win.

29. ♗c7xb6 ♗c8xc6

Black noticed only now that he couldn't play 29... ♘xb6 because of 30. ♗e4+!

30. ♖c1xc6 ♖e8-b8
 31. ♗b6-c5 ...

31. ♗xa5 ♖xb2 was worse – the a5 bishop has no good square.

31... ♖b8xb2
 32. ♖c6-a6 ♖b2-b5

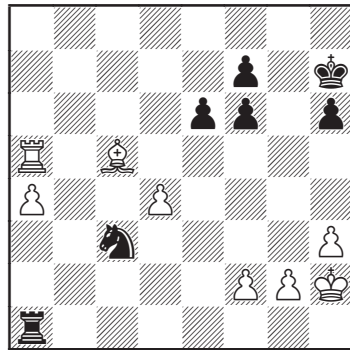
Black wants to eliminate the dangerous passed a-pawn.

According to the engine, black could maintain equality with 32... ♖b1+ 33. ♗h2 ♖b2, because after 34. ♖xa5 ♖xf2 35. a4 f5 it's only white who risks. However, playing such a move over the board is frightening: there might be no mate, and the a-pawn is running up the board. Therefore, black's desire to eliminate his opponent's rook pawn is understandable.

33. a3-a4 ♖b5-b1+
 34. ♗g1-h2 ♖b1-a1
 35. ♖a6xa5 ♘d5-c3
 36. ♗c5-b4 ♘c3-d5

Worse was 36... ♘xa4 37. ♗c5! ♖a2 38. d5 exd5 (38... ♖c2 39. ♗e3) 39. ♗d4, and black will never be able to break out of the pin.

37. ♗b4-c5 ♘d5-c3
 38. ♗c5-b4 ♘c3-d5
 39. ♗b4-c5 ♘d5-c3



40. d4-d5! ...

The only possible way to win. 40. ♖a7 ♖xa4 41. ♖xf7+ ♗g6 led to a clear draw.

40... ♖a1xa4?

Still, 40... ♘xd5! was better, and even though white's a-pawn is very

strong, it's unlikely he'd be able to convert his advantage.

41. ♖a5xa4 ♘c3xa4

42. ♙c5-d4! ...

The point. If now 42...exd5, then white simply plays 43. ♖g3, and the endgame is hopeless for black because his knight is immobilized.

42... ♙h7-g7

43. d5-d6 ♙g7-f8

44. ♙d4xf6 ♘a4-b6

44... ♗c5 was no better. 45.f3 wins easily.

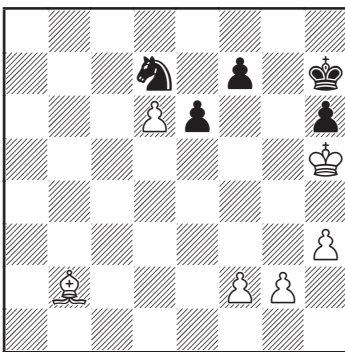
45. ♙h2-g3 ♘b6-d7

45... ♙e8 with the subsequent ♗c4 gave black better chances to save the game, trading the h-pawn for the d-pawn. Black's passive defense now leads to a quick defeat.

46. ♙f6-b2 ♙f8-g8

47. ♙g3-g4 ♙g8-h7

48. ♙g4-h5 ...



48... ♘d7-f8

The last opportunity to make things harder for white was 48...f5.

49. g2-g4 ...

Now the win is very simple. With g5, white creates a passed pawn on the h-file.

49... ♗f8-d7

50. g4-g5 h6xg5

51. ♙h5xg5 ♙h7-g8

52. ♙b2-d4 ...

Preventing 52... ♗c5 with the threat ♗e4+.

52... ♙g8-h7

53. h3-h4 ...

White's plan is clear. He pushes his pawn to h6, puts the bishop on g7, then heads to the d-pawn with his king and wins the knight for it. Black can't do anything to prevent this – his king is tied to the h-pawn, and his knight to the d-pawn.

53... ♗d7-f8?

54. ♙g5-f6. Black resigned.

**No. 14. Sergei Belavenets –
Grigory Levenfish
10th Soviet Championship
Tbilisi 1937**

Catalan Opening E00

1. d2-d4 ♗g8-f6

2. c2-c4 e7-e6

3. g2-g3 ♙f8-b4+

Black doesn't want to go for the main lines of the Catalan after 3...d5.

4. ♙c1-d2 ♙b4xd2+

4... ♙e7 was probably more precise.

5. ♙d1xd2 ...

Of course, white intends to develop his queen's knight on c3 – it's more active there than on d2.

5... ♗f6-e4

The unassuming 5...d5 was not a bad move here.

6. ♙d2-c2 d7-d5

7. ♙f1-g2 ♙d8-e7

8.a2-a3 f7-f5

Black goes for the Dutch Defense structure called the “Stonewall”, the c6-d5-e6-f5 pawn chain. But he doesn’t have a dark-squared bishop that normally does important duty in this structure – covering the weak dark squares.

9. ♖g1-f3 0-0**10. 0-0 c7-c6****11. ♞b1-c3 ♞b8-d7****12. b2-b4 ...**

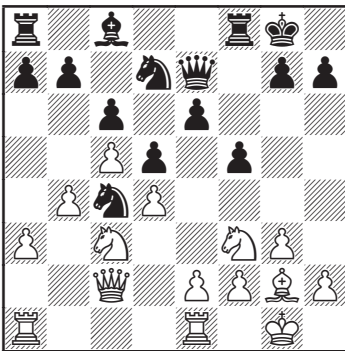
White is trying to attack his opponent’s queenside with his own pawn chain.

12... ♞e4-d6

This maneuver forces the move c4-c5, which can make it easier for black to organize counterplay in the center (with e6-e5) and on the kingside. However, his subsequent play is not consistent.

13. c4-c5 ♞d6-c4

It was probably better to get the knight back to the e4 square, which is usual in this structure.

14. ♖f1-e1 ...

A precise move that underscores the black knight’s vulnerable position

on c4: 14...e5 is now powerfully met with 15.e4, opening up the position – clearly to white’s advantage.

14... ♞b7-b6?!

Not in the spirit of the position: black has to play e6-e5, and he needed to prepare for it with 14...♞f6. The black bishop’s incursion to a6 is no good.

15. ♞f3-d2?! ♞c4xd2**16. ♖c2xd2 ♞c8-a6****17. ♖d2-c2 ...**

Now 17...e5 is met with 18.b5, and 17...♞c4 with 18.e4! fxe4 19.♞xe4.

However, instead of the game move, the natural 17...♞f6 was stronger.

17... ♖e7-f6**18. ♖c2-a4 ...**

Parrying black’s positional threat 18...♞c4. Black had created a discovered attack along the f-file, and e2-e4 was now impossible.

18... ♞a6-b7**19. e2-e3 ♖f8-b8**

Black’s tactical blow doesn’t work: 19...bxc5 20.bxc5 ♞xc5 21.♖b4. Meanwhile, 19...e5 20.♞xd5 cxd5 21.♖xb7 is just bad for black – white’s tactics, on the other hand, work well.

20. ♖e1-c1 ♖f6-d8**21. ♞g2-f1 ♖b8-c8**

Both now and on the next move, b6-b5 is too dangerous for black because of the positional piece sacrifice on b5 that will make white’s queenside pawns very strong.

22. ♖a1-b1 a7-a5?

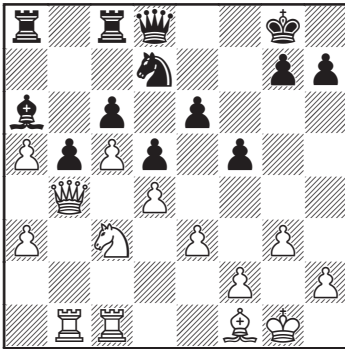
Black sacrifices a pawn to consolidate his defense. It’s hard to blame him – his position is already very

difficult. Playing cautiously with 22... ♖e7 or 22... ♖c7 would be preferable.

23. b4xa5 b6-b5

24. ♖a4-b4 ♗b7-a6

24... ♖xa5 or 24... ♖xa5 is met with 25.a4, winning a pawn and immediately crushing the queenside defense.



25. ♖b1-a1! ...

The position has changed, so the heavy artillery should be relocated.

25... ♖c8-b8

26. ♖c1-b1 e6-e5

Finally! But now, even this move doesn't bring relief: white's positional advantage is too great, and the extra pawn is quite useful too.

27. a3-a4 e5xd4

28. e3xd4 b5xa4

29. ♖b4xa4 ♖b8xb1

30. ♗c3xb1 ♖d8-c8

31. ♗f1xa6 ♖c8xa6

32. ♗b1-c3 ...

Placing the knight on d2 is more convincing.

32... ♖a8-b8?

Blundering in a difficult position.

32... ♗f6 was more resilient.

33. ♗c3xd5 ♖a6-d3

33... ♗xc5 didn't help either because of 34. ♗e7+ ♖f7 35. dxc5 ♖xe7 36. ♖h4+ etc.

34. ♗d5-b6 f5-f4

35. ♖a4-c4+ ...

The simplest. Best not to give his opponent any hope to survive after 35. ♗xd7 ♖b1+.

35... ♖d3xc4

36. ♗b6xc4 ♖b8-b7

37. g3xf4 ♗d7-b8

38. ♗c4-d6 ♖b7-e7

39. ♖a1-b1 ♗b8-a6

40. ♖b1-b6 ♖e7-a7

41. ♖b6xc6 h7-h6

42. ♗d6-b5 ♖a7-a8

43. ♗b5-c7.

Black resigned.

"In this game, Belavenets punished the future Soviet champion, the winner of the 10th national championship, for his inconsistent play." (A. Iglitsky)

**No. 15. Ilya Rabinovich –
Sergei Belavenets
10th Soviet Championship
Tbilisi 1937**

French Defense C09

1. e2-e4 e7-e6

2. d2-d4 d7-d5

3. ♗b1-d2 c7-c5

4. d4xc5 ...

Spielmann's move, used by him in the famous 1927 New York grandmaster tournament against Alekhine and Nimzowitsch. The current main lines are 4. exd5 and 4. ♗f3.

**No. 41. Ludmila Belavenets –
Milena Skacelikova**
2nd Ladies Correspondence Chess
Olympiad
1975 – 1980
Alekhine Defense B04

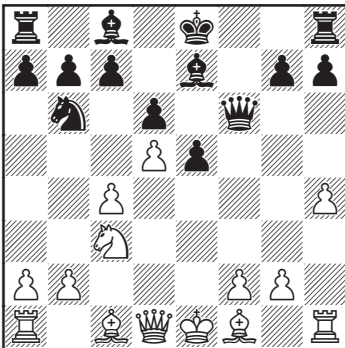
1.e2-e4 ♘b8-c6
2.♘g1-f3 ♘g8-f6
3.e4-e5 ♘f6-d5
4.c2-c4 ♘d5-b6
5.d2-d4 d7-d6
6.e5-e6! ...

I think this is a good move: white sacrifices a pawn and freezes her opponent's development.

6... f7xe6
7.h2-h4 ...

An aggressive move. Stats show that 7.♘g5 and 7.♘c3 are more popular.

7... e6-e5
8.d4-d5 ♘c6-d4
9.♘f3xd4 e5xd4
10.♙d1xd4 e7-e5
11.♙d4-d1 ♙d8-f6
12.♘b1-c3 ♘f8-e7



13.♙f1-d3 ...

I thought that white had to have an advantage here: she has a good e4 square, and the black knight is stuck on b6. At the very least, it's much more pleasant to play as white.

13... ♙c8-f5

14.♙c1-g5 ...

Keeping the bishops on the board with 14.♙e3! is preferable.

14... ♙f6-g6

15.♙d3xf5 ♙g6xf5

16.♙g5xe7 ♙e8xe7

I wasn't averse to trading pieces, thinking that if the black king is stuck in the center, it ought to be in trouble. However, white's advantage is small.

17.♙d1-e2 ♙a8-f8

18.♘c3-e4 ♙f5-f4?

After 18...♘d7! the position would be virtually equal.

19.♘e4-g5?! ...

When I made this move, I was totally sure that the c4 pawn couldn't be captured. However, white's best move is 19.c5 dxc5 20.0-0 with reasonable compensation.

19... ♙f8-c8?

My opponent came to the same conclusion and didn't capture the pawn. Nevertheless, computer analysis shows that this capture was possible: 19...♙xc4 20.♙xc4 ♘xc4 21.♙c1 ♙f4 22.b3 (22.g3 ♙d4 23.b3 h6 transposes to the same line) 22...h6 23.g3 (black has good counterplay in the line 23.♘f3 ♙e4+ 24.♙d1 ♘b6 25.♙xc7+ ♙f6 26.♙xb7 ♘xd5) 23... ♙d4 24.♘f3 ♙e4+ 25.♙f1 ♙f8! (an important Zwischenzug that allows black to get the second rook into

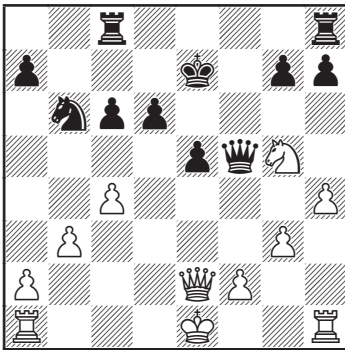
play) 26.♔g2 ♘b6 27.♖xc7+ ♔f6
28.♗xb7 ♖f7. Black has very good
compensation for the pawn: all her
pieces are active, and the d5 pawn is
weak and requires defending.

20.b2-b3 c7-c6

Black has no good moves here.

21.d5xc6 b7xc6

22.g2-g3 ♖f4-f5



23.c4-c5! ...

My opponent probably missed this
move that allows white to destroy her
pawn structure in the center.

23... h7-h6?

After 23...dxc5 24.0-0 h6 white's
advantage is obvious, but black still
had hopes to survive.

24.♘g5-e4 d6xc5

25.0-0 ♖h8-d8

26.f2-f4 ...

If the enemy king is stuck in
the center, you have to open lines.
However, 26.♖ac1 was a bit stronger.

26... ♖d8-d5

Black has nothing else.

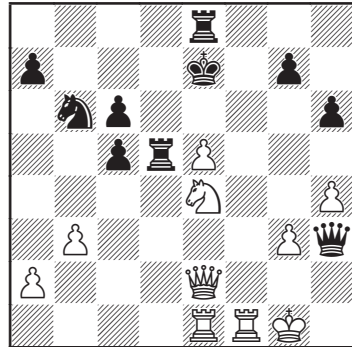
27.♖a1-e1 ♖f5-h3?

This move is losing. Instead,
white's advantage would be small after

27...♘d7 28.♗a6 and then either 28...
♖b8 or 28...♖f8.

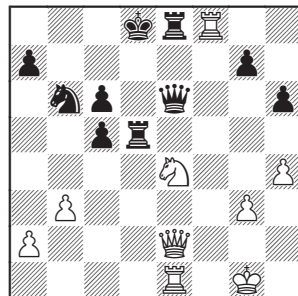
28.f4xe5 ♖c8-e8

After 28...♖xe5 29.♗f2 white
seizes the f-file and quickly invades
black's position.



29.♗e2-h5? ...

I thought it was important to
capture the g7 pawn. I honestly admit
that I didn't give much consideration
to the move 29.e6!, pointed out by
the computer. The following lines
are beautiful: 29...♔d8 (after 29...
♗xe6, there's 30.♘f6!) 30.♖f8! (an
unexpected and powerful blow) 30...
♗xe6 (30...♖xf8 loses to 31.e7+ ♔e8
32.♘d6+ ♖xd6 33.exf8=♗+ ♔xf8
34.♗e8#)



31. ♖f6!! The final chord of the combination: white transposes into an endgame with an extra exchange. 31... ♗xe2 32. ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 33. ♖xe8+ ♔c7 34. ♖e7+ (the concluding little subtlety) 34... ♔d8 35. ♖xd5, and black's position is hopeless.

29... ♔e7-d8!

The black king runs away from the center. This move equalizes.

30. ♗h5-g6 ...

Giving additional protection to the g3 pawn and attacking the g7 pawn.

30... ♖d5xe5

31. ♖e1-d1+ ...

Perhaps 31. ♗xg7 was stronger, since black cannot capture the knight: 31... ♖xe4? 32. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 33. ♖f8+ ♖e8 34. ♗f6+ ♔d7 35. ♖f7+ ♔c8 36. ♗xc6+, with mate next move. Therefore, black would have most probably replied 31... ♖d7, and after 32. ♖f2 ♗e6 33. ♖xe5 ♗xe5 34. ♗xe5 ♖xe5 35. ♖c1, white kept some advantage in the endgame. However, I wanted to continue the attack, so I unpinned the knight.

31... ♖b6-d7

32. ♖e4-f2 ♗h3-e6

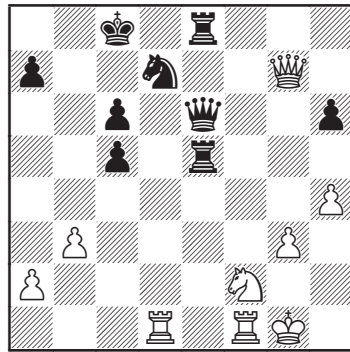
33. ♗g6xg7?! ...

Launching the trading combination that I managed to implement in the game. However, it only became possible because my opponent missed a strong resource on her move. Objectively, instead of taking on g7, 33. ♖d6 ♗xg6 34. ♖xg6 ♖8e7 35. ♖xc6 ♖e3 was stronger. The chances are mutual, but it's

more pleasant to play as white, in my opinion.

33... ♔d8-c8?!

Black's desire to get her king to safety is understandable, but she could actually launch an immediate counter-attack – 33... ♖e3! After 34. ♖h2 (34. ♖h1?! looks very sad) 34... ♔c7 (34... ♖e2?! is also good) 35. ♗g4 ♖e5 36. ♗xe6 ♖xe6, white has to go on the defensive.



34. ♗g7xd7+! ♗e6xd7

35. ♖d1xd7 ♔c8xd7

36. ♖f2-g4 ...

White regains the exchange and obtains a substantial advantage because of her better pawn structure. I finally breathed a sign of relief.

36... c5-c4?

Black gets rid of her doubled pawns and launches queenside counterplay. However, the sacrifice is somewhat premature. After 36... a5! 37. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 38. ♖f7+ ♔e6 39. ♖a7 (39. ♖h7 h5) 39... c4 40. bxc4 ♔f6 black would draw.

37. b3xc4 ♖e5-c5

38. ♖g4-f6+ ♔d7-e7

39. ♖f6xe8 ♔e7xe8

40. ♖f1-f6 ♖h6-h5

41. ♖g1-f2 ♖e8-e7

41... ♖xc4 42. ♖f5 ♖c2+ 43. ♖f3
 ♖xa2 44. ♖xh5 led to similar
 consequences, with good winning
 chances for white.

41... ♖d7 42. ♖h7 a5 43. ♖e3
 would also win for white.

42. ♖f6-h6 ♖c5xc4

43. ♖h6xh5 ♖c4-c2+

44. ♖f2-f3 ♖c2xa2

45. ♖h5-h7+ ♖e7-e6

46. g3-g4 ...

The white pawns are further advanced; in addition, white's passers are connected, while the black ones are disjointed. I tried to play this endgame very accurately, fearing to spill the advantage. It was most pleasant to learn many years later that Rybka approved almost all of my moves at the conversion stage. I also hope that nobody would accuse me of cheating!

Shortly before this game was played, Dr. Max Euwe, ex-world champion and mathematics professor, said, "Of course we can suppose that a computer will defeat a human, but I think that it will happen 100 or so years later." Just a couple of decades later, the computer destroyed the best human chess players. Euwe couldn't anticipate that technology would evolve so fast.

Back then, Botvinnik was working on the problem of the artificial chess player. He asked to be allowed to travel to America, he was even ready to pay for the travel of his whole

group out of his own pocket. Mikhail Moiseevich wanted to read lectures there and spend the earnings to pay for lodging. But his higher-ups disagreed: how can that be, how can we let our group go to the U.S. to work on their computers?!.. We would show everyone that American technology is far more advanced than Soviet technology! Such trips had to be signed off by many authority figures, and I don't know a single one who would have agreed to that.

And later, CPU performance became the main factor – simple brute force. The machine shouldn't think like a human – it has its own advantages, and the humans their own. Comparing old computers with modern ones is like comparing a turtle with a jet plane. When I began my job at the institute, we had a Ural-4 vacuum-tube machine. We programmed it with a command system – we wrote, "Take the number from A cell, add it to the number from B cell and store the result in C cell", and so on, describing every action. A 120 square-meter room was needed to host this huge machine. It stood there in the great hall, shining with all its lamps. We fed it tasks through punch cards, then checked them with a special grid. It was most amusing to see the machine swallow these punch cards. Then, the ANPU (alphanumeric printing unit) would spit out a special tape with the printout. Whereas now, an ordinary laptop is already considered unwieldy!

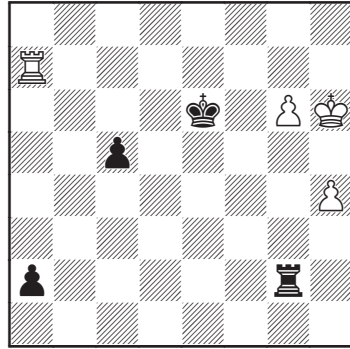
Technology has made such huge leaps in such a short time. I was already an adult when I worked in the research institute, and I'm still alive now! My aunt worked as an accountant, and she maintained the accounts with an abacus. I remember playing in Lithuania, I was around 30 at the time. A German guy pointed at the abacus in some store and asked, "What is this?" Someone answered, "Russian calculator!"

We would ride the huge abacus in our home like a sleigh. The beads were sturdy, and the wires were made of steel. My aunt got angry, but for me and my sister, it was just harmless fun. I remember all that well. Then arithmometers appeared, then the first calculating machines, such as Vega. It was such a miracle at the time. I remember how someone brought my husband a programmable calculator as a birthday gift. This is progress, you can't hide from it. That's why computers can now easily find moves such as 29.e6!. With mild annoyance, I have to admit that I couldn't find it, even though I moved the pieces a lot in that position.

46... a7-a5
 47.g4-g5 a5-a4
 48.g5-g6 ♖a2-d2
 49.♙f3-g4 ...

The piece roles are reassigned: the king runs to help its pawns, while the rook will hold the opponent's passer.

49... a4-a3
 50.♙g4-g5 a3-a2
 51.♖h7-a7 ♖d2-g2+
 52.♙g5-h6 c6-c5



53.h4-h5 c5-c4
 54.g6-g7 ♙e6-e5
 55.♖a7xa2 ♖g2xa2
 56.g7-g8=♙ ♙e5-d4
 57.♙h6-h7 ♖a2-d2
 58.♙g8-d8+ ♙d4-c3
 59.♙d8-c7 ♙c3-b3
 60.h5-h6 c4-c3
 61.♙h7-g6 ♖d2-g2+
 62.♙g6-f5. Black resigned.

The Czechoslovakian women's team was always a difficult opponent at all the Olympiads, and they made it that much harder for the USSR to take 1st place. Back then, any place but first was considered an abject failure. Winning the next game greatly improved our team's chances to take gold.

**No. 42. Krystyna Hołuj-Radzikowska
 – Ludmila Belavenets
 3rd Ladies Correspondence Chess
 Olympiad
 1986 – 1991**

King's Indian Defense E99

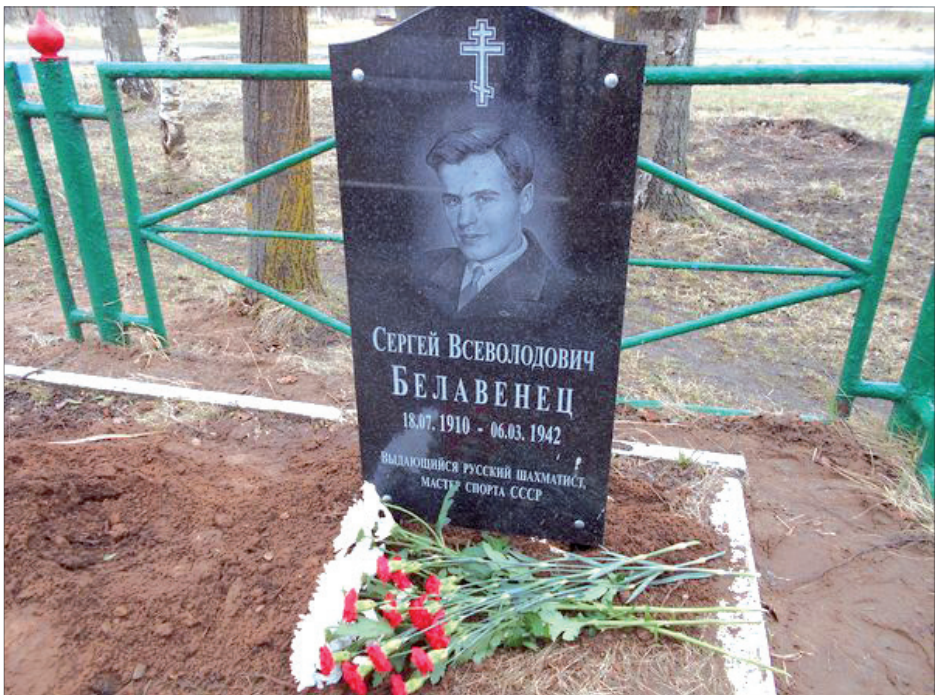
1.d2-d4 ♘g8-f6
 2.c2-c4 g7-g6
 3.♘b1-c3 ♙f8-g7



The Sergei Belavenets Chess House in Brazil

In 2018 the Sergei Belavenets Chess House (Casa do Xadrez) was opened in Porto Alegre, Brazil. This was the initiative of a local chess fan, Russian speaker and chess memorabilia collector Fabiano Ferreira, an oncologist by profession. Back in 2014, Dr. Ferreira met Ludmila in Moscow while he was in the process of purchasing an envelope from a seller in Latvia that had been addressed and sent by Sergei to his family on 2 February 1942, just a month before his death. Ludmila wrote an article in *64* (no. 5 / 2014)

about their meeting and about the actual letter, which she already had in her possession. Thanks to Dr. Ferreira's interest in the Belavenets family, he



decided to open the Sergei Belavenets Chess House, which is now a thriving chess club and educational center. Ludmila together with Sergey Yanovsky traveled to Brazil to take part in the opening ceremony. Fabiano kindly supplied the following photos from the ceremony, and also from a visit by Alexei Shirov in 2020.

